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*ÆONIAL.*

*THE FLOOD — GEHENNA*

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Æ O N I A L .



# ÆONIAL.

THE FLOOD: GEHENNA.

(AUREA'S VISIONS.)

BY THE

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# ‘ÆONIAL.’

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*AUREA’S VISIONS.*

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## PART I.

GEN. vi. 2, 13, 14, 17 ; JUDE 6.

THE light, wherein her soul once shone as light,  
Still kept its token on her tresses’ gold ;  
But swathed round ever by the world-reek’s fold  
Grew wan ; then dark. And on her spirit smote  
The Hell-myths onward flung from age to age,  
And caught and echoed evermore by rote ;  
That Sin hath life as God’s unquenchable ;  
‘ That Heaven’s throne stands but as the throne of  
Hell ;’  
‘ That Christ once foiled disowns His heritage ;’

'That He, Love's Fount and Wisdom's, Might of  
Might,

Creator, Saviour, hath beyond the grave  
No puissance, no device, no will to save,  
Nor mercy even to annihilate.'

And is 'God Love' for one short æon's flight,  
(If such be Love,) then, through all cycles, Hate?

Nought else knew Aurea's soul, but blind and lone  
Covered in the gloom, and wailed for strength and  
sight,

Anguished, and hung'ring for some new strange  
thing,

Good, or accurst, in Hell's or Heaven's despite.

Her wealth, and youth, and beauty's blossoming  
Were pain ; and hating all, Self most of all,  
She strayed heart-dumb beside the blatant main,  
That boomed on, on, on, like a drunkard's drone,  
Unmeaning ; till she felt a sense outcrawl  
Slowly, and sting her snakelike to the brain.

Thus—'Hearest thou the dull drear monotone,  
Eternity's true voice ? The voice I lend.

Yet I awake at times, and snap the moan,  
And snap the ceaseless little lift and fall,  
And mount, and reach for liberty and call,  
And soaring, joying, clasp—vacuity :  
And sink exhausted, baffled, back again,  
To drearier wailing. Flecked with laughter-spray,  
Whose haze flits round the eternal reefs of pain,

And fringed with joy-foam whirled on sorrow's bay,  
Monotony spreads, waste monotony,  
From past to present, to the endless end.'

With bitter loathing Aurea heard ; and wept ;  
And sank down shuddering by the haggard sea ;  
And numb with weight of desolation slept.  
The spirit's eyelids oped ; and wearily  
They would have closed again ; (it might not be.)  
Before her, dull, as if it scarcely crept,  
And margined by a straight, grey, willow-line,  
Like breakers, breaking not, or breaking ever  
Without a sound, lay stretched a mighty river.  
And old words started as she gazed thereon,  
' Weeping we sat beside Euphrates' stream :'  
And yet she saw no towers of Babylon,  
Palace, or fane, amid the dreariness :  
And evermore there came a far wind's whine,  
As of a living thing in sore distress.

Then wearily her soul's eyes swerved ; a gleam  
Broke in on them ; and eagerly she gazed.

O'er the dull level, shapes Seraphic strode  
Twain armed (and forth from these the glory  
flowed),  
But in their midst walked one whose fetters blazed ;  
And from himself lights zig-zag leapt, that shore  
Dun air and golden rays with streaks like gore.

He could have crushed those other two, she  
thought,  
Had he been free, prepared, and armed as they :  
A something more than chains seemed laid on  
him ;  
His face was steadfast now, now seemed to swim,  
And once more harden. Theirs were set alway,  
As though they heeded not the thing they wrought.

Then as the brilliance onward moved, she caught  
The glint of eyes : low-crouching by a brake  
A form of subtle faultless symmetry,  
With eyes effulgent with strange lights and powers,  
Watched, like some beautiful lithe beast of  
prey,  
That quivers as about to spring, then cowers.

In Aurea's soul a jarring whisper spake :  
' That glance was tranquil once ; and carelessly  
Scanned all that old world's life's monotony :  
(Yet was not that life so monotonous,  
So utterly fulfilled of littleness,  
As that which crawls and swelters around thee.)  
But the fire kindled in her : glorious  
Her glances woke ; and men's were turned to fire :  
They quailed ; they bowed them down in their  
desire ;  
And 'mid the passion-gurge she laughed and toyed.

They sued ; they battled :—Let them curse or bless,  
Plead, fight, and win, or perish, what recked she ?  
Her glances evermore flashed out and joyed.

Until eyes yet more lustrous than her own,  
Angel eyes, shone on hers : Hers scornfully  
Gazed back ; then fell ; anon in fear and ire  
Flashed out ; then flickered ; and at last grew  
dim :

His eyes' light, piercing through the veiling mist  
And eye and brain, and onward gliding, kist  
Her spirit : and she gave her soul to him :  
And found a joy she never yet had known :  
A little while.—

Her eyes are very bright  
Now ; but with helpless, hopeless, furious glare,  
Watching him passing to the pit of night :  
Behold those eyes : behold her crouching there ;  
Bride of the Seraph Prince of Seraphim !'

Wroth from sheer pity Aurea turned from her ;  
And looking t'ward the God-shaped Prisoner,  
Marked a tear fall ; no tear of penitence  
Or sorrow, but the lacerating sense  
Of past delight to be no more for aye.  
It owned no fear of all the age-long pain  
Fast closing on him ; when he, confined low,  
Heat-strangled, crushed from joy and sight and  
sound,

(Save the sore panting of earth's flaming heart  
Answering his own heart's gasps amid the gloom)  
Shall wrestle, strive, and heave, with fruitless strain,  
While the fire struggles in its maddened round :  
And each shall moan, as wounded foe by foe,  
When both lie impotent to help or slay.  
He cramped, jammed down ; the fierce fire finding  
    room  
Wherein to writhe and stagger to and fro ;  
Till both break forth to light on God's doomday.

But the gleams passed ; and when they died  
    away,  
Nought, nought, long time, could Aurea see or hear,  
Only she seemed to count (nor seemed it strange)  
Years, like the tick of minutes, following year ;  
Till bright and quick outshone the Vision's change :

River and sky were both as crystal now ;  
And near the river, in the foreground, stood  
Moundlike, a black bulk, hand-wrought, reared of  
    wood,  
And therewithin a hum of life-swarms stirred ;  
While, time by time, sharp, broken as from fear,  
Out stole a hollow cry of beast or bird :  
Without, quick hammersclink, the saw's teeth scream,  
Through thud of axes, and the rip of planes.  
She saw the leader of the toiling band

Start up erect, and heave his weary brow  
To heaven, then southwards: then he turned to  
speak:

But at the instant song and laugh and cheer  
Rang joyously; and as these swept anear  
One of the workers flung his axe away,  
Faced him, and scowled, and cried, 'Years twice  
threescore

Have clanged and clanked along, and mocked at me;  
Worse than the ribald crowds that point and jeer  
Oft as this witless shapeless thing they see.

The full set time is come; I toil no more;  
Your birds and beasts are lodged; what else  
remains,

Thou and thy sons see to it as ye may:  
My curse be with you, and your raree-show:  
Give me my promised wage, and let me go!

She saw the throng close in; she saw his hand  
Stretched, and she heard the master's words pant  
quick,

'The wage is thine; is here. But, O my friend,  
Not thy toil only, all men's work must end,  
Their pleasure, their desire, their life to-day:  
Cast in thy lot with us; fear God, and live.'

'I mean to live,' he cried; 'and in the nick,  
Lo! here are girls and flowers, and harp and fife;  
Avaunt, stale bogies, and Hurrah for Life!'

He shouted, waved his arms, and through the  
crowd  
Plumped headlong; and they shrank aside, but  
laughed,  
For straight in front of him a girl flower-crowned  
Stood flushed, and balancing a golden cup  
Bent with a mock obeisance to the ground,  
And chirped, 'The Freedom of our Guild we give.'  
Down dipped his head, with quick deep gulps he  
quaffed,  
Drowning a drought that seemed of centuries :  
Then jerked out thanks, and gave a lurching bound,  
And skipped, and bawled strange songs ; while all  
cheered loud,  
To see his antics and his ecstasies,  
And toil-duds flaunted 'mid their festal gear.  
'Let Noah drink ; and see Him brighten up !'  
A voice cried. And in haste the same fair girl  
Filled up her goblet once again, and ran,  
Reached him, stopped, gave herself a sudden twirl,  
Held out the cup, and sinking on one knee,  
Trilled, 'Yea, the master shall surpass the man !'  
Then brake a voice of might in agony,  
Riving them, 'Judgment, Judgment hastes, looms  
near :  
Rend heart and garment, cast you down, and pray ;  
Shriek "Mercy !" for it may be God will hear  
Even yet.' Wild above that kneeling form,



Now wan with quiv'ring eyeballs, clashed a storm  
Of whoops and yells, 'Away with him, away!'  
'Ha! ha!' bawled one. 'Who'll sob, and grovel?  
Who?

Here before all to crown our frolickings?  
What, no one?' And another yelled, 'Go to,  
Now let us offer rare burnt-offerings  
That cost us nought:—Burn yon monstrosity,  
And round the dancing flames our dance shall twine.'  
Others, 'Good sooth 'tis hot enough; let be:  
What? Spoil toil's rampant mania's full-blown sign?  
Ripe fruit of thrice four decades' idiotcy;  
Our jest; our choice memento "Laugh and play."'

And others, 'Keep your bonfire dance till night;—  
Wait you till Noah stows Himself within;  
He too will dance, flame-robed.' The turmoil's din  
Broke, pierced by shrill cries, 'Wrangle ye and fight,  
Crazed by a knave's or madman's dream or lie?  
We came for frolic; quick, begin, begin!'

Shamefaced they paused, turned, laughed, took  
hands and flew,  
Singing.

Athwart their whirl a shape swept by,  
Wrapped in a coal-black mantle streaked with red.  
That shape held Aurea's eyes, she scarce knew why,  
Save for the motion's charm and poise of head:  
But even as the song's strength gathered, slow  
The step grew; then ceased wholly. Aurea's sight

(While yet her soul swam with the song-tide's flow)  
Abode upon the close-veiled figure's grace,  
So clear in very stillness ; then a throe  
Ran through it, and the robe's fold fell aside ;  
And Aurea knew the beauty of that face,  
And matchless eyes' shine of the Angel's Bride.

Around her forehead clung a star-rayed zone  
Wondrously wrought ; no child of Tubal-Cain  
Had fashioned thus the blended gold and white,  
Wherein, with heart of fire, a priceless stone  
(That if of earth, earth nevermore again  
Hath giv'n to man) flung down a fluttering light,  
Tinting the pallor of her face forlorn :  
Whereon, remembrance of dead ecstasy  
And love, whose fulness none can understand,  
Had pressed, and no more lifted, its chill hand ;  
Till all the features' rippling witchery  
Seemed, in the years' drift, slowly to congeal  
Into an ice-mask clear and colourless,  
Stamped with a set sad look of pitying scorn.

But now the song brings back her love once more ;  
And now the blade-bright eyes are clouded o'er ;  
They see her long-lost Love ; His eyes kiss hers  
Again :—O Vision, ever, ever stay !  
Ah ! now it breaks :—(O song, why wake this  
sight ?)

She sees his chains, his executioners,  
Her Lord's last look.—

Her gaze began to reel,  
And then in sudden passion of appeal  
Surged up t'wards heav'n's hard glittering hollow-  
ness :

Then fell back knowing that its cry had failed ;  
And all the face was changed ; the gem's self paled,  
Amid its brilliance, at the gleaming ray  
Out-leaping from the splendid eyes, dilate,  
That flashed the soul-fire forth in fire of hate.  
And thus while Aurea watched had swirled the  
dancers' lay :

‘Clash the loud cymbals, clash ;  
Sweet cymbals, ring ;  
Hands on the timbrels dash ;  
Joy-voices, sing ;  
Sing, sing ;  
Catch hands and swing.

Once in the fair lost days  
Gods heard the singing ;  
Heard, and looked forth from the blue of their  
skies ;  
Saw, and their glory as garments off flinging,  
As a diver his robe ere he leaps for the prize,  
Leapt, and the sunbeam's shine  
Laughed with their laughter divine,  
As they sped down the swift bright ways  
To the splendour of woman's eyes.

Ah ! Love's light,  
Love's might,  
On their eyes and their hair, in their breath and  
their touch !

Not thus, never thus, had been known,  
Never yet unto man had been shown,  
Though dreams had imagined them such,  
Those dwellers in kingdoms of glory unmeasured in  
breadth and height.

For whenever the earth is at rest,  
Most still, most sweet,  
With won bliss glowing, or flushed with the quest,  
And her dead things quicken in gladness, and meet  
Live spirits that tremble and whirl and beat

In joy's pain-zest ;  
Hath a man ever heard a God's voice  
Calling to men to rejoice ?

But lo ! when the earth and the sky  
Are as wild beasts tearing and rolling in fight ;  
(While the den, or the thicket's gloom, dark as  
night,

Shudders with buffet and cry  
Until one or both shall die)  
Then whoso heareth shall hear  
The God's voice thunder and crash,  
Through the agonized cloud's red gash,  
Calling for mourning and woe, lamentation and  
anguish, and fear !

But once in the flower of all time  
Very Love was felt and was seen :  
Earth's daughters then in their prime  
Knew a love that had never yet been.

\* \* \* \* \*

But the Lover-Gods' Brethren, or Princes, in  
Heaven

Judged it sin to be never forgiven,  
Thus, as they deemed, to abase and demean  
The heart of a God to a love terrene.

And swift was the doom-word ; swift and sore :  
Swift through the morn's heavy death-hued grey  
Hither and thither ran flashes of fire :  
And the world never woke, till the world's desire  
Seized and bound had been hurried away.

\* \* \* \* \*

Earth knoweth the face of the Gods no more.—  
Let them now come down, we will bow and adore !

But never ever again  
Will a God's heart hazard the death and pain !  
Craven or passionless sons of the sky,  
Wither, or live, as ye will or can ;  
And earth and the woman shall be for man ;  
Man who loveth, and liveth, more truly than Gods,  
though he die !

He lives ! And he takes while he lives  
Whatever the glad earth gives ;  
    Eating the best,  
    While the flavour shall last ;  
    Drinking with zest,  
    Ere the drink-time be past ;  
And the great gift he taketh more precious than  
    all,  
Woman, his playmate, his ruler, and thrall.

    Sing, sing ;  
    Catch hands and swing.  
Hand kisses hand ; shall the lip stint kisses ?  
    Vain shall your hung'ring be, spirit and limb ?  
Kiss!—What to these are the high Gods'  
    blisses?—  
See, in its envy their Heaven grows dim !'

## PART II.





## PART II.

GEN. vii. 11, 18, 21, 22.

AND with the song the South-wind's music blent,  
Softly, as some low sweet accompaniment ;  
That softly grew ; then rolled in gyre on gyre ;  
And Heav'n's fair bosom, white without a stain,  
Wrinkle, or speck erewhile, was blotched plague-  
black.

Anon the gloom's vault shrieked : and dance and  
choir

Ceased in the burst of yells demoniac.

Then the din changed:—With plunge of hissing  
rain

The shudd'ring mirk clave ; and the river-flood  
Rose baying, as the bandog's cry for blood.

Then lo! as if, as broad as Heav'n, a hand  
Had caught the darkness upward out of sight,  
Light was ; and soft the wind's lute pulsed again.

And Aurea watched the storm-snapt groups  
unite ;

Some came from under trees ; and some stole out  
Beside the ark ; that, half-grotesque, half-grand,

Loomed, with its triple rows of eyes shut fast,  
Mocked, so it seemed, yea even to the last,  
Not by man's voices now, but drifts of light.

One with a toss shook off her gloom and  
pout,  
E'en as she shook the rain-drops off in spray,  
And carolled forth, 'Heav'n's petulance is spent ;  
Hey for the song, now for the frolic-play !'  
Some drooping, and as if the light's reflow  
But drove the clinging wet in, to the heart,  
Gazed piteous, lost in ill's presentiment.  
And wrath lay dark as storm on many a soul ;  
'Through earth and heaven,' they muttered, 'Fiend-  
eyes dart,  
And Fiend-hands grabble ; and when joy is whole,  
Rend it.'

Afar grey vapours stooping low  
Hung down like cloudy pillars from the skies :  
Then from above snapt off, touched earth, and  
stood  
As smoke-wreaths hovering o'er a sacrifice.  
And some one pointed, and laughed out, ' Ha !  
See !

Since no man now wastes flesh or faggot-wood,  
The Gods vamp up yon altar's mimicry !'

And midmost this his laugh large rain-globes  
dropped,  
Pit, patter, slow, beside him, one by one ;

And these, as if from very languor, stopped.  
Small heed men took ; until there rang a shout  
(While troubled faces looked up here and there),  
'The storm, again ; the storm ! A waterspout !  
It swoops upon us ; haste for shelter, run.  
Yet let Spite's by-name, Fate, baulk joy to-day ;  
To-morrow's morn shall bring back song and play.'

And even as the words went forth, the air  
Seemed massing, curdling, well-nigh tangible,  
A dark'ning burden : Then a thunder-blare  
(Echoed by screech and whirr of flutt'ring fowls),  
And downwards leapt Heaven's lakes aerial :  
And earth's frame's bulk groaned broken with sharp  
spasm ;  
And midst man's panic-cry, and brutish howls,  
Sealed founts, and river-floods, and caverned meres,  
Roaring and foaming swashed through cleft and  
chasm.

And lo ! Euphrates' stream whose steadfast  
might  
Pressed onward, as the old tried battle-horse  
Thrusts through the crush and crashing of the  
fight,  
Now, as the charger, by a quick home-lunge  
Of lance or falchion through the flank pierced, rears,  
Upreared on high, and fell with headlong plunge :  
And three floods battling, interrushing, three

Commingled, churned to seething murd'rous yeast,  
Rolled and dashed hither thither stone and tree,  
Drowned limbs and helpless swimmers, man and  
beast.

Past a crushed heap, the ark's co-builder's corse,  
A lion drifted with the eddy's sway,  
His lips drawn back and great teeth glittering :

Wounds, and bewilderment, and cold, and stress  
Of famine and of utter helplessness,  
Stamped the fierce visage with a scowl of fear ;  
Such fear as in his kindred no man saw ;  
(Not, when, with spine cleft by the barbèd reed,  
The Assyrian lion in the after-day  
Strove to strike, laboured to upheave the paw  
That clung to earth, weighed down, numb, master-  
less,

While on his eye-balls gleamed grim Nimrod's  
spear.)

Then something, as the prey-beast swam, slid  
near,  
Nearer, on swiftly, with the flood-bore's speed,  
Straight forward : And it saw the forest-king,  
And quailed, and shrieked, and strove to swerve  
aside

With horror's strength : the fury of the tide  
Grasped, and a moment poised, the shrieking roe ;  
Then headlong slung her on the lion's flank :—

The ghastly jaws oped ;—not to rend :—a yell  
Shrilled from the throat that once scared holt and  
    fell,  
And with the anguished cry the monster sank.

'Mid flashing robes and jewelled arms and brows  
That soared and bickered, ere they sank beneath,  
One face rose ;—Aurea knew it instantly ;—  
Though hueless now, and crowned with no flower-  
    wreath ;  
Between the bosoms was a deep red rent ;  
And there, driv'n in by force of some fell blow,  
Gleamed splinters of a shivered golden bowl.

Still flowed Heav'n's deeps ; and still the deep  
    below  
Swelled ; but the rush assuaged. Bursts of lament,  
Screams of fright, prayers, and blasphemy, and vows,  
Eddied and jarred, and hurtled to and fro,  
And up, as if to find or force a vent  
Out to some God, if God, or Fiend, might be  
With ears to hear beyond that wat'ry hell.

And Aurea watched and shuddered : then there  
    stole,  
As 'twere her own soul's whisper, through her soul  
Once more a voice : ' See now earth's garniture,  
Yon waste with dying specks of life besprent :

Bared to thy gaze lies nature's verity ;  
Life-froth and desolate monotony !

E'en then across her sight, floating secure,  
The ark's hull passed ; and she made answer, 'These,  
'These, are safe !' 'Safe,' the voice said mockingly,  
But was it worth those six score years of toil,  
The forfeiture of fellowship and mirth,  
To drift through shrieks of death they know not  
where,

Close-pent with fetid birds and beasts of prey,  
Horrors, that must be fed, watched, day by day,  
Lest they break forth, and paw and talon seize,  
And horn and beak and muzzle gore and tear,  
The flood-maw's leavings?—Nay, but they are safe!  
And they shall stand safe on a draggled earth,  
'Mid corpses' stench and loathly solitude,  
To seek and shape fresh housing, breed, and  
moil ;

Yea, to be germs of future tragedies !

Enough ! why further heed yon deluge-waif ?  
Turn, watch the main plot, leave this interlude !

She gazed round :—O'er the waste a tree-top  
swayed,  
Whereto a Girl, with arms that gleamed and shook,  
Clung, and the water-flow rose o'er her feet.  
After long ages Grecia's Sculptor's heart  
Hungred to find such beauty's counterpart,

To guide the hand that bade the stone repeat  
His spirit's vision of the Dryad-maid :  
Who from her home, with love's audacity,  
Lured by her Sea-god lover, blithe had strayed  
Far o'er the heaving clamour of the main.  
Till lo ! a shattered trireme's hulk trailed past :  
Then had she faltered all at once dismayed ;  
And throwing out her arms had caught the mast,  
That creaked and lurched, and poised itself aslant :  
There clung she :—startled by her frightened look  
Her Ocean-wooer clasped her tremblingly,  
And strove to soothe her terror all in vain.

And thus : yet not as they : in ghastlier fear,  
In peril, grim, and real, and imminent,  
The mortal maiden grasped the flood-washed tree,  
Held by her mortal lover. And he cried,  
' Courage, mine own ! nay, look not o'er the sea ;  
Look on thy Love, whose arms encircle thee.  
Courage, mine own ! the deluge-rush is spent.  
Mine, mine, now, wholly : none gainsay it here.  
They willed to part us ; none can now divide !'  
' Thine,' she breathed, ' wholly ; but, ah, how long  
thine ?'  
' Ever,' he answered, ' let what will betide.'  
Then were they silent each in dread and woe.

Still rose the waters round them, now kneec-deep ;  
And on her tresses' maze a wind-gust hissed,

And tossed the mass of ruddy gold and brown,  
 Up from the water's edge, like thistle-down :  
 And o'er her forehead were the clusters flung,  
 O'er dainty nostril, the black lashes' sweep,  
 And eyes' blue-grey o'ershot with amethyst.

With fond touch stroking back the coils, he  
 kissed

The pale arched lips : again his words outpant :—  
 'Climb, Love, be brave, a little higher ; twine  
 One arm, thus, round the branch ; let this hand slide  
 Up o'er the stem ; now catch the near bough, so.  
 Art tired, and faint, my sweetest ?'

As he spoke,

Upraising her, his thoughts on her, his brain  
 And nerves and thews jaded by overstrain,  
 He slipped ; a twig whereon his foot pressed broke ;  
 And the great deep with one quick snakelike  
 switch

Writhed up, and snatched and whirled him from  
 her side.

A moment in her horror lone she hung ;  
 While round her flew, all flame from haft to head,  
 Heav'n's darts : and one struck home.

The leaves fell charred ;  
 The blackened boughs stood naked ; and she swung  
 Towards her dead love on the wave-breast, dead.

Hours, accurs'd hours (how many, or how few,



How fast, or slowly, Aurea never knew,)   
Wailed by ; when lo ! with grace inviolate,   
Her limbs' superb perfection yet unmarred,   
Glode, unresisting, on, the Angel's bride.

The scorched boughs met her, and the water's   
pitch

Lifted her ; and she raised herself upright,   
Half out, half in the water. Very still   
Her face was ; yea, as though with live eyes Fate   
Gazed full upon her eyes, that quavered not.

Yet Aurea saw, or willed to see, a thrill,   
An under-tremour, soul-deep, that betrayed   
Could One be pardoned, or His love forgot,   
E'en now she might have bent her head, and   
prayed.

But hope had perished : and the lightning-glare   
Leaping athwart her fire-gem's answering light,   
'Thwart wave-soaked carcasses, and torn tossed hair,   
Lit up the beautiful, wide, fearless eyes,   
That spake in dumb defiance to the skies.

Then with a crash (ere Aurea was aware),   
With crash, and shock as of a bursting shell,   
The flood-face clave. While lightnings shot and   
fled

In and across the chasm, Aurea fell   
Down with the fair live form, and ghastly   
slain ;

And like a python's jaws with foam and hiss  
Earth's bars closed.

Then she heard the voice again ;  
Not whispered now,—but shrilled in tones that tore  
Her soul, as flesh by swords is rent and shred,  
Crying, ' Eternal bonds in hell's abyss,  
In fire and darkness, bind you evermore !'

### PART III.



### PART III.

MATT. ii. 23 ; v. 25, 26 ; LUKE xii. 58, 59 ;

PS. cxxxix. 8.

SHE strove, and tossed, and cried out in her dream ;  
Then brake the bands of darkness suddenly ;  
And Aurea heard once more the wailing sea,  
And saw it writhe beneath the wan star-gleam.

Home she fled ; home ; but homeless everywhere  
And dry her heart was, as the moon's hard scale,  
Where never winglet falls of rain or dew,  
Nor evermore the gliding rill's caress ;  
And light from Heav'n's brimmed lake, whose efflu-  
ence

Comes to greet all, the withered and the hale,  
The hard and gentle, with its lovingness,  
To touch and heal, or comfort, or renew,  
Comes unavailing and unwelcomed there.

All joy-time seemed but as a sliddery slope  
Down-plunging to eternal Hell ; and hope  
As brain-mist, or the heart's fume ; verily  
A scoff to changeless, fell Omnipotence.

As one to whom all paths are pleasureless,  
And the path chosen, whichsoe'er it be,

Is hateful (rest more hateful, utterly),  
Once, shrinking from all faces, forth she stole,  
And sped straight on; then stopped as dazed; then  
    swerved

Swift to the right; in o'er a moorland track,  
That worm-like through wide gorse-brakes crept  
    and curved,

And thrid out into breadths of heather-blush.

And there the track was jagg'd by stony dips,  
And there it struggled on through marshy strips,  
Through fern, and grass like bristly hair, and rush;  
Past pines by sea-winds shent, that, grim and droll,  
Held out maimed limbs; past aimless groups of oak,  
Whose west boughs, tangled by grey lichen-shag,  
Were shorn off close as by a reap-hook's stroke;  
While to the east they bent with crouching back  
And crook'd neck, till their forelocks brushed the  
    heath.

On she sped; whither?—(So there be no stay,  
She recks not whither :) up a quarried steep;  
Then she felt, wond'ring, that her steps 'gan flag;  
For all the stretch and ravel of the way  
Seemed to have coursed by, past her, at her will;—  
Yet steadfastly the ridge was scaled; great trees,  
One after other, on the slant beneath  
Sunned their lush boughs rejoicing; and to these  
As to a friend's arms, or arms dearer still,  
She threw herself, and in their midst she lay.

Then hands that limn forth lifelike the far eld  
Touched her, the tender cunning hands of sleep :  
And with the gladness of the vision, lo !  
The golden light relit, God's glory's grace,  
Shone in her soul, illumining life's woe  
And all its seeming drear monotony ;  
As when the sullen blind face of the sea  
Meets all at once the noon-sun's unveiled face,  
And flushes into joyous radiance.

That light illumined to its blackest deep  
Hell's Æon, miscalled Hell's eternity :  
And Aurea saw that God Himself was there,  
His love's robe dimmed by no vindictiveness,  
Yet with the hand upraised that shall not spare,  
Till the lost souls by age-long anguish quelled,  
Turn to Him crying for deliverance,  
And find the lifted hand smite not, but bless.

From a plain's reaches through a sharp-cut dell  
Sleep's spirit led her spirit ever up,  
And forth upon a lawn by mountains rimmed,  
Amidst whose varying green glanced white-walled  
    cots,  
And limestone spurs, and massed flowers snowy-  
    white,  
And carmine blossoms ; and it seemed to her  
E'en as though some Titanic labourer  
Had hewn 'twixt hills the hollow of a cup,

And Genii with hands of subtlety  
Touched, and transformed it all to malachite  
Inlaid with silver bars and ruby-spots.

But nought of worth was there, so Aurea deemed ;  
Bold-mannered women babbled round a well,  
And peasant-lads, rough, ruddy and stout-limbed,  
Played boist'rously, laughed, jeered, and fought, and  
screamed :

But from a cottage opening quietly  
That moment came a young Boy, bright and strong,  
Thus like, yet how unlike, that brawling throng ;  
Such peace was his, such love, joy, chivalry,  
Never attained, nay nowise understood,  
By their fierce spirits' animal hardihood.

Clust'ring they shouted, ' King, a King ! Who ?  
Who ?'  
And from their midst one cried, ' Make Jesus King.'  
Then in a flash they wheeled, ran, hemmed him  
round,  
And thrust into his hand a rod, robed, crowned,  
And hailed him King. And strange it was to see  
His grace of rule, in mimic judgment-hall,  
In gala sports, and march processional,  
With waved boughs, tabor, pipe, and psaltery :  
And ere long many a tiny tott'ring thing,  
And (in amazedness, and half in awe,



That such accord should hold that roistering crew)  
Shy maids stole in to join his retinue.

Then heav'nwards looking as to One he saw,  
And knew, and loved, the Boy-Chief spake his hest ;  
Forth from child-lips the psalm of God sprang free ;  
As when of old the heights of Bethlehem,  
With all their star-flung quiv'ring diadem,  
Sang with the Shepherd-lad, the King to be.

And now from street, and scattered cottages,  
And fount, and hill, and garden-terraces,  
Beholders thronged. And as when, group on group,  
Spearmen, with fierce hearts houndlike on their  
quest

To track down Judah's chivalrous outlaw,  
In Ramah faced Jehovah's prophet-troop,  
Praising their God, and felt the praise arrest  
Foot, heart, will ; so the laud-song wrought on them ;  
All evil died, and every tongue was praise.  
And, born in heav'n's far heart, a glory fell ;  
And earth's rude music, folded in its rays,  
Rose, toned, attuned, to perfect melody.

And in that light, and through the palm-leaves'  
whirl,  
Aurea's fond gaze still followed that fair boy ;  
And sweet his look was, sweet, and far away,  
And gladsome : ' Joy,' she breathed, ' hath fruit of  
joy !'

And round him, like a saffron tulip's cell,  
With beryl streaked, and rose, and gold-tinged  
pearl,  
Fulfilled of loveliness lay Nazareth !

‘But where?’ (the thought leapt on her) ‘where  
are They ?

Whose voices in that old world's hour of death  
Flung to the face of heav'n the challenge-scoff,  
“Let God come down !—no God for evermore  
Will come !”—And they themselves went down to  
hell.

Nay, God is come : and would they now adore ?

As if the working of her thought had worked  
Outwards beyond herself, some Power that lurked  
Grimly beside her seemed to put forth hands,  
And clutch at her, and seize, and force her back,  
She knew not where, from that bright pageant :  
And faint and dim the music of the chant,  
And the light, shade by shade, grew faint and dim,  
From glimmer unto gloom of gloom hell-black.

Moans piteous, howls of fury, and flame-glints,  
And panic-cries of strengthless Nephilim,  
Thrid through it :—then the nether founts upbrake,  
And flowed ; till all was one wild burning lake,  
Within whose deeps screams darted reboant.

At length it ebbed away, drained swiftly off

As rain-pools by the suck of thirsty sands ;  
But left a gloom-slough, wherein none might stir :  
    Again the blackness, after lingering stay,  
Shrank, severed ; and in sweeps and fair broad  
    bands  
Shone cloud-fields, veined and washed with sunset  
    tints,  
That changed to landscapes of the world's spring-  
    day  
Traced line by line without a flaw or blur.

And Shapes were there amid the earth-scenes'  
    wraith ;  
And Aurea knew them. Some were beauteous  
    still,  
Though change had passed on all, and scar and  
    scath  
Showed where the darkness clung, and Hell's fire  
    eat.

There He who through twelve decades' strain and  
    fret  
Had laboured on the ark, yet went not in,  
Lay restful now, as earth's tired workers rest.  
    A Girl, half lovely as the Cherubin,  
And half repulsive, wandered slowly by ;  
Though with a forked wound scarred from breast to  
    breast,

She could repel, so seemed it, or defy,  
All thought of doom awhile, and every ill ;  
For in her eyes danced lights as on a rill,  
And her lips rippled, as if memory  
Saw him as when he once, with head down-  
thrust,  
And gulp on gulp, drained dry her golden bowl,  
And whooped and pranced with catch and caracole.  
Now he looked upward t'wards her dreamily,  
Admiringly, and with a still content.

Full to the left, from where a willow swung,  
And o'er a fount's lips drew its flossy tress,  
Then jerked it back, as though in sore mistrust  
Or petulance, came voices so tense-strung,  
That Aurea turned to listen. There stood twain ;  
Whom once the flood had clasped, as if to shield  
From every hand or voice malevolent,  
And yet (as oft-times mock love's arms have done)  
Slew him, and held the maiden to be slain.

Through life, yea, dying, they in heart were one ;  
And now they stood together. Her eyes' stare  
Gleamed like a burnished helmet in the sun,  
With shifting flash that knew no tenderness ;  
His lowered. Anon came drawings each to each,  
Loathings, and fierce, and amorous mad speech ;  
For still the old love's life beat strong ; but there  
Love's plague-spots, now no more by flesh concealed,

Nor, as in Paradise, by God's breath healed,  
In both, unto the gaze of both, lay bare.

An Angel-shape passed near, from foot to head  
The excellence of beauty, perfected,  
That to itself lured mirror-like all sheen  
And sweet hues there, to give them back refined,  
To light with lovelier glow that soft bright scene.  
With hurrying tread he moved, and hurrying glance,  
As one who craved unceasingly, and sought  
A something ever hoped for, never found.

When lo! a form from out the gloom-lair's  
round,  
Wherein was set that pearl-land, forth sprang sheer ;  
But stopped, and staggered in the light as blind :  
Beauteous it was, his beauty's own compeer,  
Though scarred, and all devoid of radiance.

But with a cry as of the suddenness  
Of hope fulfilled too strangely, with a bound  
He reached her ; and her groping stretched hands  
caught

And tightened on him in a clutch that spake  
(And never tongue had clearer utterance)  
Of loving rapturous wonderment, and ache  
Of woe's revulsion ; while he multiplied  
With tone and touch caresses on caress.

The face against his throat lay motionless ;  
Till once, when Aurea's gaze, that dipped away

To where the lovers still stood lover-like,  
Foe-like, looked back, she saw the face upturned,  
And saw and knew as in that far-off day  
The matchless eyes' shine of the Angel's Bride ;  
E'en as her soul's voice rushed : ' At last ! At last !  
Love, mine, regained ! Ever, hours, centuries,  
While hopelessly I yearned and hoped for thee,  
Drave anguish riving as an iron spike,  
With stroke on stroke, through hand and foot and  
brow.

And hast thou also suffered, hoped, and yearned ?  
Oh, mine own, found once more, at last ! And thou  
Never wilt leave me more. Gehenna's brood  
(Love, hast thou seen their loathly ghastliness ?)  
Haunted me, tortured me. But all is past—  
For thou art with me :—I have no fear now.'

(And lovingly he held and fondled her.)

' Yea, sweet, sweet Love, all hellish agonies  
Herein were summed, that thou wast torn from me,  
Suffering I knew not what, I knew not where ;  
Thou, the most loving, oh, most lovable  
Of all things living. But at length, at length,  
The heav'ns have given thee to my quenchless  
prayer ;

Kind heav'ns ! Or hast thou in thine own God-  
strength

Rent chain and pris'n, and passed forth Vanquisher  
To seek and claim thy bride in midmost hell ?

Close, closer, round me let thy dear arms twine.  
Love, Love, who from thy full beatitude,  
Thy place of glory, might and majesty,  
Didst stoop to make the death-doomed earthling  
    thine,  
Through all my being thine to thee I cling,  
O husband-love, exulting, worshipping !

In on the passion of her love-steeped eyes  
His gaze, that still had shunned hers heretofore,  
Fell glittering with a——Fiend's malignancy.

A shriek rang ; Aurea shrieked ; she seemed to  
    feel  
The stab strike, as she saw the victim reel,  
Quiver, and shrink, and nigh cease utterly.  
As when the Fay that bears a shallop's guise,  
With tiny fragile hull and sail and oar  
Instinct with life (men call her Nautilus),  
Floating mid kisses of the sun and sea  
Forth to her love, beholds the slimy thing  
Whose black coils, deadly as a serpent's sting,  
Enwrap the lightning-shock, athwart her glide ;  
And struck, sinks shrivelled : so the Angel's Bride  
Sank.

And as they who watch and scrutinize  
Fibre and nerve and pang-beat when their knife  
Is searching some live creature's tortured frame,

The Demon watched ; till back once more her life  
Surged with abhorrence, rage, despair, and shame.

Behind her and before her, everywhere,  
That which had seemed but stones, or clods of  
earth,

Or tufts of grass, sprang up tumultuous  
In shapes that jeered and tossed with maniac mirth  
Of fiendish laughter ; then they circled round,  
And madd'ning more and more to see her wrath  
O'ermaster shame and horror and despair,  
They snarled and yelped, as dogs, and howled, and  
bayed ;

Yea, each became in very form a hound  
And mad, stark mad : and now their quickened  
whirl,

Lolled tongues, and clashing teeth, were horrible ;  
Yet wrath upheld her ; though their rabies' froth,  
That slabbered all their lips and muzzles, sprayed  
Her limbs and face, and wheresoe'er it fell  
Gnawed deeply in, as vitriol gnaws through flesh.

Then, as if swung by blind-mad impetus,  
And with a crash of yells in unison  
Most dissonant, they wheeled, and fled away :  
The Angel-Fiend remained ; none else, not one.  
He watched her.

But the Ark-wright, where he lay  
Content at full length lounging, and the Girl,  
Still loit'ring by him tricky, mischievous,



Heard ; and fear flung him straightway to his feet,  
Fear shot forth both, as when a sudden fresh  
Launches the ponded waters in a sheet  
O'er the dam-head.

The Lovers moved no jot ;  
Their limbs were set, their eyes gazed visionless,  
While onwards coursed the hounds as heeding not  
Nor seeing them ; save one that, passing, slued  
Half-round, and struck with jagg'd fangs savagely  
The girlish form : She shrieked, and tottered ; He  
Threw forth his arms, and with fond gentleness  
Drew her to him : her sweet mouth's clear-cut  
curve

Was warped, so forcefully she reined it back ;  
And like a filly's as in act to swerve,  
Her eye seemed strained aslant by dread's pang-  
rack.

He soothed her as a mother soothes her child  
And at the lulling of his hand and words  
She lay in his embrace, stilled, reconciled,  
Yet with eyes quivering as a new-caught bird's.

And Aurea through the form's translucency  
Saw how the virus ran : a lassitude  
Creeps slowly o'er her ; yeasty oozings fleck  
Her shivering lips ; her teeth jar, bickering :  
And now her limbs twitched ; now a doglike  
bark

Broke from her throat in jerks ; and, with a spring,  
She dashed her teeth against her Lover's neck.

And all the while the Builder of the Ark  
Fled with the maid. And as they flee, they  
          screech,

As screams a lev'ret when the greyhound's snap  
Strikes at her haunch at utmost speed and grips,  
A second, ere the wrenched skin yields and rips.

And now they plunge out into darkness ; each,  
Where very Demons' selves might blench and  
          grobe,

Scours wild with fear, and voiceless now with  
          hope.

But ever and anon a thunderclap  
Bursts ; and a lightning-flash reveals their flight ;  
Hell's universal spirit cheers the hounds,  
While storm-fleet through the horror and the bruit,  
All now as flames and to themselves a light,  
The hell-dogs race with outstretched muzzles  
          mute.

Then welled a voice forth subtly keen, but low,  
Felt more than heard (God's voice) through  
          Tophet's bounds ;  
And at its touch the pack together stopped,  
Each in his place, as stunned by some quick blow.

The mad girl's teeth relaxed ; backward she  
dropped ;  
And back the venom ebbed from heart and brain :  
And from her Lover passed the shock, the  
pain,  
The gathering rage, and mania's imminence.

As when a lion in its cage, or bear,  
Gathers itself in act to fell or clutch  
Some human form that rashly ventured there,  
But struck by red-hot iron, through the bars,  
Recoils and flees before the fiery bite :

So, as he stirred in his ferocity,  
Back shrank the Angel's Counterfeit, at touch  
Of that still voice, in cowed hate's impotence.

And welcome, e'en as earth's most restful night,  
Around the Angel's Bride, and terrorless,  
A refuge sweet, and with no eye of stars,  
Demons, or men, to peer on her distress,  
Clouds soft as folding wings closed hushfully.



## PART IV.



## PART IV.

I PETER iii. 18, 19, 20 ; ISAIAH liv. 7, 8, 9.

SOON, once again, outbrake (for brief is Rest)  
Floods, fluxes, shocks, tornadocs, prodigies,  
Upheavals, transformations, juggleries  
Of fire, gloom, Fiends : yet mid hell's phasmata,  
Unto one spot, and with one impulse, all,  
All whoso could, as with one purpose, pressed ;  
Thither the strong rushed, there the maimed would  
crawl ;

And thither, marvelling, passed Aurca.

And lo ! a window ; and a multitude  
Clustered agaze ; for whoso looked forth thence  
Beheld the pauseless drama of the earth :  
Far, very far off, seemed it ; but intense  
Waxed vision's power ; yea, hearing, and a sense  
Of ghostly contact, seemed transfused with sight.

She looked ; and saw once more a Triumph-  
scene,  
And hills ; and, as on hills of Galilee,

Palm-branches waved, and children's wild delight ;  
And marching there elate and dominant  
By Him who Kinglike rides o'er garments strewed  
Are Galilæans. And the Rider ?—He  
Is Jesus, called the Christ, the Nazarene.

Then rose a picture glassed in memory,—  
The bright Boy-Chief, and child-troop jubilant.—

Greater His triumph now a thousand-fold ;  
And now for cots, like nests of swallows, glued  
To the cliff-face, few, scattered, small, and rude,  
A City glistens with its rampart-girth,  
Palace, and towers ; and, sun-lapped on the height,  
With lucent walls, and shimmering roofs of gold,  
That seemed of heav'n's own essence, so had caught  
Unto themselves, or with themselves had brought,  
All splendours of the upper deeps of light,  
God's Temple flashes, as a smokeless flame.

But e'en as vapours swarth and poisonous  
Shear through the summer's blithe rose-scented air,  
So the black heart's curse of the Pharisee  
Outspiriting mars the joy-shine and acclaim  
Round Him who cometh in Jehovah's name,  
Their own Messiah sealed with sufferance,  
And trust, and dint of love unsatisfied.

His whole frame quivered once ; He would have  
spread,  
In love's sharp throe, she weened, His arms forth  
wide ;



But down they sank ; His spirit's moan she read,  
'Ye will not thus be drawn, not now, not thus!'

But her sight then, from straining fixity,  
Failed ; and lay long inert :—then languidly,  
Skimming the watchers, tarried on the maid,  
Arkwright, and Lovers, one by one : and lo !  
Voiceless they stood, and moveless in awe's hush,  
Gazing, as they who watch a tragedy.  
And while she wondered, in her wonderment  
Her eyesight, flick'ring, missed them ; and it swayed,  
And slantwise fell where swept, with rush on rush,  
Over the Angel's Bride grief passion-blent.

As when hands gripping on an unstrung bow  
Bend it ; and fix, and to the steel-head draw,  
The arrow that before lay impotent,  
And drive it forth swift, straight, and glancing bright ;  
So now desire's strength grasping Aurea's will  
Strung it, and both together launched her sight  
Forth to the far earth-vision.

And she saw  
A thronging concourse, a procession still,  
And glint of things uplifted ; but not now  
Hand, or cloak, waved in joy, or palm-tree-bough ;  
But woe-tossed arms of women, lines of spears,  
And, on men's shoulders crushing, rough-squared  
beams.

Behind the midmost faintly, tott'ringly,

Onward a wan form toils, 'twixt plaint-cries, tears,  
Curses, revilings, taunts, and ribaldry :  
Anon to left and right the rabble streams,  
Jostling and rushing o'er a skull-shaped hill,  
While wearily the grisly loads are borne  
On to the central space, and set down. Straight  
Of those load-bearers two, the outer two,  
And He who with frail steps but blenchless will  
Had followed them, are clutched, and stripped :  
          close clung  
The raiment, and the scourge-wounds' jags were  
          torn :  
Then (one resists not) they are backward flung ;  
And from sight hidden. Yet to Aurea's ear  
There came a cry, though not of pain or fear,  
A pleading cry, ' They know not what they do ;  
Forgive them, Father ;'—then a hammer-clash !  
While nearer press the crowds.

Anon with heave,

Thrustings and haulings, and a lurch, up rock  
Three crosses laden with the writhing weight  
Of limbs transfixed. Ah God ! the jar, the shock,  
As down within the hollowed grooves they crash !

She saw afar the shuddering Seraphim :  
And ringed with Fiends, and sound of mockery,  
' Let Him come down, and we will now believe,'  
Jesus hangs motionless, with arms widespread  
Towards the mob, the Priests His murderers,

Yea and the myriad myriads quick and dead :—  
Those outstretched arms, which death alone shall  
    free,  
Shall draw resistless All men's souls to Him.

On earth a wail, engulfed within a yell  
Of half-gorged hate, yet ravenous ; in Hell,  
Amid the wail of Tophet's prisoners  
A tone thrilled, even while the Fiends laughed out,  
That startled them : their laugh grew stridulous,  
And ceased : and all at once the Demon-rout  
Sprang in upon the lost souls' watching band,  
Waking all horrors of that horror-land,  
And dashed them down to midnight's pit. Time  
    crept  
To woe's abysm : then a voice upleapt,  
'Jesus is dead ; and dead descends to us !'

And the Fiends wait, as wild beasts scenting food  
At feeding-season ; and the human souls  
Wait, as men oft on earth (though pitying dread  
Was goading them to turn their face and flee)  
Have waited spell-bound when the trumpet's blare  
Told of one coming, who, by might of wrong,  
Forth from his torture-cell is, guiltless, led  
To axe or fire.

    Again the voice out-tolls,  
'Receive, O Hell, thy Prey !'

A multitude,  
Wave upon wave, of Seraph-legions throng  
Beneath Hell's portal ; and the black-arched fangs  
Flash as with sunlight. God's hand stays them  
there :

But onward moves the Christ : the barrier clangs  
Behind Him. Lone He stands in Tartarus  
With Demons threat'ning, taunting, triumphing.  
Then, all at once, while flapped their menace-  
roar,  
They reeled and fell, as in Gethsemane  
The High Priest's armed crew : and, wallowing,  
Foamed, like the dumb child whom their kindred  
tore.

Little by little their convulsions' throes  
Lessened ; and ceased : slowly the Demons rose  
But, quailing and astonished, spake no more.

And Christ stood silent ; and as when the sea  
Sleeps in the sunglow lulled deliciously,  
And all its dainty blue gleams tremulous,  
With flutt'ring points of radiance starry-white,  
Now (save that for the soft blue's silvery light  
Fires deep-red flicker over blackness) thus  
With soundless rhythm pulsed Gehenna's floor.

Anon, as when on earth, within the place  
Where fury of devouring fire is slave,  
Back on a sudden swings a furnace-door,

And glimmering dusk flares crimson ; so Hell's  
face

Changed : Fiends, and men, and Christ's form,  
loomed out red,

Dyed with the blaze as if bedrenched with blood.

And now, as when the furnace-jaws outpour  
Their full smooth-flowing brook of molten ore,  
Forth a flame-river slides o'er Tophet's bed ;  
And ghastlily, as men in death-pangs scream,  
Screamed souls and Demons at the scathing tact  
Of that ongliding, steady, ceaseless flow,  
To which earth's fires are but as phosphor-glow.

Then (as was Jordan once) dammed back, the  
flood

Massing, and huddled into one vast wave,  
Soared up on high, a leaning tottering wall,  
That burst on Christ : and through the cataract  
Hard broken voices glanced, as splinters fly,  
' Christ is o'erwhelmed ; Christ ; all ; and hope of  
all ;

O'erwhelmed for evermore : ' while the fire-fall  
Spirted, and seethed, and lashed itself and coiled  
Whirling ; until, with cry empierced with cry,  
And like a maddened slaughterous live thing,  
foiled,

It shrank, and turned and fled before His face,  
Swift as a serpent to its hiding-place.

And Tophet's dwellers watched Him in amaze ;  
As Babylonia's King, the Counsellors,  
The Captains, Deputies, and Governors,  
And all the Princes, watched, when they beheld  
Men come forth scathless from the furnace-blaze.

Gloom followed glare, and deepened to eclipse  
And blinding blackness ; and the blackness swelled  
And drew round Christ ; and as the strength that  
caught

Earth's silt of old, yet soft with lingering ooze  
Constringed it, and, with ever-tightening grips,  
Wrung it to stone ; so forces wonder-fraught  
Condense the mirk, and churn it, champ, and fuse.

No voice spake now ; for never voice or sound  
Could pierce there ; Demons in the deathly hush  
(Though not on them the innermost mirk-core)  
And human souls, lay overwhelmed, down-ground ;  
And, deadlier aye, the burden seemed to crush  
Their spirits' essence, and to craunch and bore,  
And rasp it element from element.

Yea ! Dissolution's pang grew imminent.  
Then from the gloom's heart broke a golden flush,  
Quick-spreading, till the mass seemed chrysolite :—  
Anon the glimmering aureole waxed bright,  
And the load adamantine seemed to melt,  
And fade like mist, before Christ's radiance.

Yet awe-bound lie the Fiends, as in a trance,

Prone ; but the rescued souls around him close,  
As, list'ning, hung'ring, earth's crowds closed Him in ;  
And sweet from out the sweet light's deepening Rose  
His voice flowed. Silently the hearers knelt,  
While Love unveiled Itself, Love consummate  
Through Death and Hell : and as the Spirits felt  
God's mercy's greatness, and their own great sin,  
The guilt-scars faded from them, spot by spot.

At Jesus' feet (as in the Deluge-day  
She knelt at Noah's), with eyes quivering,  
The girl kneels now ; but now in no dismay ;  
Yet, e'en as one who wins some strange glad lot,  
She seemed to tremble. But the Arkwright's eyes  
Were soft with that bright calm that beautifies  
The face of man ; and there knelt, wholly blest,  
Healed of the deadly love once gnawed by hate,  
(Hate wrought to fourfold madness by love's sting),  
The Lovers ; and there knelt the Seraph's Bride.

Her soul was with the Christ's soul communing,  
Lapped in delight ; the wondrous eyes' unrest,  
And hardness of the old defiance-gleam,  
Had passed : and in the day-spring of God's peace  
Their matchless beauty shone intensified.

Beauty, whose innate charm flashed dazzlingly  
Amid the young world's maiden-flowers, whose  
bloom  
Kept the fresh impress of the Hand Divine ;

Beauty, whereon lit love's unclouded shine  
From Angel eyes, and dwelt there, to illume  
Earth's jewel with celestial brilliancy :  
And now a glory seemed to permeate  
That loveliness with grace ineffable,  
The glory's reflex of Immanuel.

Yet with the hallowed passion's mightier stream  
Mingled the primal Love's rill ; and she cried  
For mercy to the Lord compassionate  
For her lost Lord ; nor shall that heart-cry cease,  
Till (for it cometh, and she waits in trust)  
Some wave's crest of the miscalled waveless sea,  
Some Æon-billow of eternity,  
Shall bear him once more, pardoned, to her side.

And now on rapine's sons, and slaves of lust,  
Spirits that once mid earth's most impious seed  
Had towered as Giants, floated musical,  
From Jesus' lips, good tidings of release,  
'Sin's doom is ended, doom Æonial.'

Wide, at the word, the gates of Tophet swung ;  
And Heav'n's Host, swift as long-pent waters freed,  
Surged in, and saw the Lord they sought unhurt,  
Circled by clustering rainbow-hues, and girt  
With joy, and homage of a joyous throng,  
As when he King-like rode from Bethany.

Then, all at once, Gehenna thrilled with song ;  
And, with the swirling light and melody,



Flashed and reëchoed, like the splendour-zone  
That throbs with hymnings round Jehovah's throne :  
And through the woe-land thus the Seraphs'  
anthem rung :

‘O Christ, slain Christ, our Adored !  
Hell's Prey, from the Hell-maw restored !  
Alleluiah !

‘When Thy feet passed onward, and lone,  
Doom-led, Thou wert passing within,  
Slowly, away from our sight,  
Into the furnace of sin,  
On our spirit a grasp was thrown,  
God's Hand's overmastering might :  
And our Being writhed anguish-shaken,  
Yea ! as struck by the death-worm's sting :  
Could it be Thou again wert forsaken,  
Christ Jesus, our King ?

‘But where are the terrors of night ?  
And the flood of the fire ?  
The shriekings of pain and affright ?  
And the Hell-Lords' ire ?  
The burning and blindness are fled ;  
And the Fiends have no word, neither  
stir ;  
But crouch in the brightness, and hear

The chant of the worshipping choir,  
"Saviour of quick and of dead,  
Hail ! Hail ! Hell's Vanquisher !"  
Alleluiah !

'Heard ye the strain with our triumph blent,  
The music-tones from the Firmament ?  
Alleluiah !

'O ye spirits of men, whose cry  
Was a wail and a challenge of yore,  
"Let a God descend from His sky,  
And we will adore !"  
Praise ye, bless ye, and magnify  
His mercy for evermore.  
Praise the Lord God who came  
From the fulness of joy to a horror foreseen,  
From the throne of the skies, for a love terrene,  
Down to the scourge and the cross and  
Gehenna's flame !

'Unto Christ belong courage and might, and the  
Victory !  
And in earth, and the deepmost abyss,  
Is a voice, as the Heav'n's own voice,  
Calling to men to rejoice,  
For the goal of Creation is Bliss !  
Alleluiah ! The first-fruits Ye :

But the Day of the Vintage creeps  
Steadfastly, steadfastly, ceaselessly,  
Afar in the vastity,  
Up through the cycles' deeps.  
Alleluiah !

' And the Æons to Æons call :  
" God's Love shall be All in All !"  
Alleluiah !

' In love Thou hast all things created,  
With love Thou dost all things renew ;  
Thy soul's love with love shall be sated,  
Jehovah—Jesu !'



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